



We stand together with refugees and we invite you to do the same.

TOGETHER WITH REFUGEES

FAIR BEGINS HERE

LOCAL MP ENGAGEMENT TOOLKIT



TOGETHER WITH REFUGEES

Together With Refugees is a national coalition of over 600 national and local organisations who believe in showing compassion for people fleeing war, persecution, or violence and who want a kinder, fairer and more effective approach to supporting refugees in the UK. Coalition members include grassroots and refugee-led groups, international development charities, trade unions and faith groups.

LOCAL MP ENGAGEMENT

With a new UK Government and Parliament, we have a real opportunity to have our voices heard and secure a fair new plan for refugees. To do this we need to show politicians of all parties that the majority of people in the UK want a kinder, fairer and more effective approach. This is why across the country members of the Together With Refugees coalition are reaching out to MPs in their local areas to build connections, tell them about all the work being done to support refugees in their community and explain why it is important they support a fair new plan. We know the new Government is planning on introducing legislation on refugees so now is a crucial time to build connections with our local MPs.

#FAIRBEGINSHERE

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FAIR BEGINS HERE

The Fair Begins Here campaign aims to organise and project a broad, united, and loud movement at national and local community level calling for a fair new plan for refugees. We know that we're up against parts of the media and other powerful forces who will double down on pushing a hostile, hardline narrative. But with a new Government and Parliament and new legislation on its way, there is a chance to come together to change direction.

If we all take positive action together – persistently and consistently – we can win.

OUR AIM

To secure a clear commitment from the UK Government to develop and start delivering a fair new plan for the UK's approach on refugees and asylum which replaces the current drivers of hostility and division with a new logic of justice, humanity and effectiveness.



WHY WE NEED TO TAKE ACTION NOW

The horrific far right riots we witnessed in the summer, including violence aimed at refugees and asylum seekers, must be a turning point, away from the divisive politics, racist rhetoric and demonising language of the past.

In recent years the right to refugee protection has been under all-out attack. The Illegal Migration Act introduced by the last Government extinguished the right of people to claim asylum if they travel by irregular routes (such as small boats). It represents an abdication of our long-held international obligations. The UK's withdrawal from international responsibility-sharing comes as the number of people forced to flee their homes is at an all-time high and at a time when international collaboration for solutions is needed more than ever.

The new UK Government has made some improvements - including scrapping the Rwanda scheme, discontinuing the Bibby Stockholm barge, creating a new pathway for family reunion for Afghan evacuees and admitting people to the asylum system in order to clear the asylum backlog. But we have also seen a continued focus on border security, returns and the use of detention centres. So we need to keep the pressure up to secure the deep change we need for a truly compassionate, fair and effective approach to refugees. Ahead of the new legislation, now is the time to build connections with our MPs and start persuading them to support a fair new plan for refugees.



A FAIR NEW PLAN FOR REFUGEES: WHAT WE'RE CALLING FOR

Britain's refugee policies ever-more uncaring, chaotic and costly. They aren't working for refugees and they aren't working for communities across the country. It's time for a reset of the system, to get it working again with a new plan for refugees – one that is fair, just and compassionate. The plan needs to chart system-level change refocusing energy on protecting and welcoming refugees to enable them to quickly get on with rebuilding their lives and contributing within the community as equal citizens.

The plan should redirect precious resources away from short-term, wasteful, headline-grabbing policies to long-term, systemic ones. It should include new partnerships between central government (across departments well beyond the Home Office), the UK nations, local government, civil society and local communities. It should also deliver stronger democratic accountability and oversight of the system. People with lived experience as refugees should be at the heart of designing this plan, putting it into practice and ensuring accountability for delivery. The plan needs to build collective benefit for everyone in society to create a 'better us', rather than the current 'them and us' approach characterised by isolation, division, and hostility.



A FAIR NEW PLAN WOULD...

ENSURE PROTECTION FOR PEOPLE FLEEING WAR AND PERSECUTION

Ensure protection for people fleeing war and persecution through the restoration of the right to asylum and upholding the UK's commitment under international law.

PROVIDE A PROPER STRATEGY FOR WELCOMING REFUGEES

Deliver an integrated welcome strategy for refugees. This strategy would ensure refugees have their asylum claims heard fairly and effectively, and can rebuild their lives with fair welfare support, a decent home in the community, the right to work and language skills.

FORGE STRONGER GLOBAL COOPERATION TO TACKLE ROOT CAUSES

Forge stronger global cooperation and responsibility sharing to tackle the root causes that force people to flee their homes and provide positive solutions when they do, including through routes to refugee protection.





ENGAGING WITH YOUR LOCAL MP

More than half of MPs in Parliament were elected in 2024 and all MPs - including those re-elected to the House of Commons - are aware the changing political landscape means they already need to start thinking ahead to the next general election. As many political experts have said - there is no such thing as a safe seat for an MP anymore. So all MPs will be paying even closer attention to what their local voters think.

Many MPs will have heard from the small, but vocal, minority who oppose a compassionate approach to refugees. But it is crucial they hear loud and clear from as many people in their constituency who stand together with refugees as possible, particularly people with lived experience of the asylum system.

Over the coming months we will be writing to our local MPs to build connections and starting to persuade them to sign the [Fair Begins Here Parliamentary Promise](#). We also want to set up as many meetings as possible with MPs so they can hear about the brilliant work being done to support refugees in their constituency and why a fair new plan is needed. Finally, we want to publicise our MP engagements on social media and with the local press so as many people as possible hear about our call for a fair new plan.

AIMS OF MP ENGAGEMENT

1

Write to your local MP to explain why we need a fair new plan for refugees and start persuading them to take action to help secure it - including signing the [Fair Begins Here Parliamentary Promise](#).

2

Meet with your local MP so they can hear about the work being done locally to support refugees and you start building a connection with them ahead of the upcoming legislation.

3

Your local community hears about your MP engagement through great social media posts and coverage in the local press.

FAIR BEGINS HERE PROMISE

Across the country hundreds of organisations have joined the [Fair Begins Here Promise](#) to reject hostility, demonstrate solidarity with refugees and commit to taking action to win a fair new plan for refugees. Ultimately we want MPs to join our call for a fair new plan for refugees and stand with us by signing the [Fair Begins Here Parliamentary Promise](#).

Has your organisation signed the Fair Begins Here Promise? If not please sign up [here](#) before you engage your local MP.

If you have signed up already, could you help get more organisations in your local area to join? We have guidance on how to do this - including a template email - [here](#).



WE CALL FOR A FAIR NEW PLAN
TOGETHER WITH REFUGEES
FOR REFUGEES

WHAT ARE WE ASKING MPS?

All MPs are different and the position of their political party may influence what we are asking of them. The key is building a strong connection and to start persuading them to sign the Fair Begins Here Parliamentary Promise.

Here is what you should ask for based on your MP's position:

WARM MPS

These are MPs we already know are supportive of refugees and/or whose parties position is positive. This could be a MP you already have a good relationship with or a new MP.

- **The ask:** The key aim is for them to sign the Fair Begins Here Parliamentary Promise and then publicise their commitment to a fair new plan for refugees (more details and materials below). You should also ask for a meeting to discuss the fair new plan in more detail and tell them about all the great local initiatives to support refugees.
- **Publicity:** At the meeting take a picture with the MP to share with local media and on social media afterwards (more details and materials below).

PERSUADABLE MPS

These are MPs who could be persuaded to support a fair new plan for refugees and/or a new MP who you don't know much about. Some of these MPs may represent parties who are not always the most supportive of refugees but personally want to be supportive. For these MPs building a good connection with local groups is really important.

- **The ask:** Asking for a meeting where you can tell them about all the work being done to support refugees in their community and explaining why you support a fair new plan for refugees is a great way to start. You could either hold the meeting at the MP's office or suggest they visit your organisation to see first hand the work you do.
- **Publicity:** At the meeting take a picture with the MP to share with local media and on social media afterwards (more details and materials below).

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT TO ENGAGE WITH MPS FROM ALL PARTIES

We know that there are MPs who want to see a better approach to support refugees, and there are others who are open to being persuaded. However, we also know some MPs and parties are less likely to be supportive of refugees. It is still important we engage these MPs. Ultimately MPs represent their constituents who have the power to vote them back in or boot them out. For these MPs you can still request a meeting where you can tell them about all the work being done to support refugees in their community and explain why you support a fair new plan for refugees.

You may also want to think if there are other groups or community leaders your MP is more likely to engage with and what you can do to ensure your MP hears from these voices on the importance of supporting refugees.

While these MPs may not be willing to meet at this stage, by writing to them they will have heard why their constituents support a fair new plan for refugees and may be more willing to engage in the future. **Here persistence is key.**



STEP I: GETTING IN TOUCH WITH YOUR MP

I. FIND YOUR LOCAL MP

You can find out who your MP is, their contact details including their email address, and how to access their website [here](#).

2. RESEARCH YOUR LOCAL MP

If you have a new MP or you're engaging your MP for the first time, you should do some research about them, including their party's position and whether they have said anything before on refugee issues. You can do this by looking at their voting record, questions they've asked, or their social media feed and website. Find their voting record [here](#).

JOIN TOGETHER WITH OTHERS

It is important that your MP hears from as many different organisations from across their constituency as possible. If you know other local groups who work with refugees or support Together With Refugees (you can find our membership [here](#)) why not consider writing to your MP together and suggest a joint meeting?

3. WRITE TO YOUR LOCAL MP

We have provided a template letter [here](#) which you can use to write to your MP. You may want to personalise the letter based on the research you have done on the MP. You could also include your own reasons for supporting a fair new plan for refugees.



A large group of diverse people, including men, women, and children, are gathered outdoors. Many are holding white signs with a red heart and the text 'AYE WELCOME REFUGEES' and 'AYE STAND TOGETHER WITH REFUGEES'. Some are wearing face masks. The background shows a stone wall and a paved area.

KEEPING TOGETHER WITH REFUGEES IN THE LOOP & FOLLOWING UP...

Once you have written to your MP, please let us know: either fill out [this form](#) or email us at info@asylum-reform-initiative.org.uk

When you write to your MP, you may not receive a reply straight away. You can always follow up with your MP's constituency office by phone. Check out their website for up-to-date contact details. Be polite but persistent.

If you are still struggling to arrange a meeting with your MP, check whether your MP is holding open 'surgeries' that you can attend. You could also request to meet with a member of the MP's staff as a starting point.

Some MPs may be more responsive via social media so if you have not heard back you could consider asking them on social media. Again be polite but persistent.

STEP 2: PLANNING YOUR MEETING WITH YOUR MP

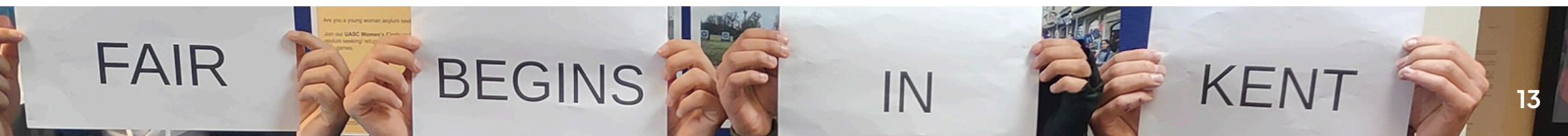
WHO WILL ATTEND

It can be beneficial to work with other local groups (including Together With Refugees members) so that your MP hears why people across their constituency support a fair new plan for refugees. You may also want to think about any community leaders or groups who the MP may know or may be likely to be persuaded by.

PLAN YOUR MESSAGES

It is best to arrive at your meeting with very clear messages you want to convey and a clear ask for the MP. You could consider having a practice session with your attendees to test out different scenarios and build confidence. Here are some things to consider but remember focusing on your personal reasons and the local community are the best ways to engage your MP.

- Why are refugee rights important to you?
- What work is being done in the local community to support refugees?
- Why is the current refugee system broken and what impact is this having on people? If people feel comfortable doing so, this is where sharing lived experience of the asylum system may be helpful.
- Why are you calling for a fair new plan for refugees and what does that mean? Please see pages 5 & 6 for guidance.
- What can your MP do? Please see page 9 for guidance. The key ask if your MP is supportive is for them to sign the [Fair Begins Here Parliamentary Promise](#).
- How will you be publicising the meeting? It is important your MPs knows you plan to share the meeting on social media and with the local press. There are more details and resources - including boards for your MP to hold in photos and template press releases - in section 3.





SUPPORTING PEOPLE WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE

If you yourself do not have lived experience of the asylum system, it is particularly helpful to work alongside those who do. People with direct experience of the asylum system are best placed to represent their aspirations for Government policy. With thanks to One Strong Voice for their advice, [here](#) is some guidance on supporting people with lived experience.

FOLLOWING UP WITH YOUR MP AFTER THE MEETING

After the meeting make sure to follow up with your MP and their office. Thank them for the meeting and provide further information they may have asked for.

WHY AN MP MIGHT NOT SIGN THE PROMISE

You may find that your MP says they are supportive of refugees and understands why we need to reset the system but they are not able to sign the [Fair Begins Here Parliamentary Promise](#). Some MPs - for example members of the Government - may not be able to support a campaign which is different to their party's official position. This does not mean it is not valuable to build a relationship with this MP going forward and there may be other ways they can be beneficial to our campaign. For example, if your MP is a minister or shadow minister they have the ability to privately put pressure on key politicians and change things from the inside.

- If your MP signed the [Fair Begins Here Parliamentary Promise](#) you can follow up with the picture you took and [this MP pack](#) which includes suggested social media content as well as other materials which allow the MP to publicise that they have signed the Promise.
- If your MP was supportive but did not sign the Promise you can still follow up with the picture you took at the meeting and encourage them to share it on their social media and website. It may take multiple meetings to persuade your MP to join the Promise so you could also suggest another meeting or invite them to visit you to see the work you do to support refugees locally.

TOP TIPS

- Focus on the positive work being done in your community to support refugees and the breadth of support across the constituency.
- If possible, ensure people with lived experience of the asylum system are able to put the case to the MP. You can find guidance on supporting people with lived experience [here](#).
- If it's a first meeting, limit yourselves to asking just one thing from the MP. View the meeting as the beginning of a conversation and a way to develop a longer term connection.
- If you're asked something you don't know the answer to, it's completely reasonable to say you'll follow up with further information after the meeting.



PROTECT NOT
PUNISH
REFUGEES

STEP 3: PUBLICISING THE MEETING

GETTING A PHOTO WITH YOUR MP

Aim to get a photo with your MP when you meet. We have created special boards for MPs to hold in the photos - including if they sign the Fair Begins Here Parliamentary Promise. You can find the boards as well as tips on how to use the them and getting a great photo [here](#).

GETTING A QUOTE FROM YOUR MP

If you plan to share your MP engagement with local media it is important you get a approved quote from your MP. [Here](#) are some draft quotes for you to ask your MP to agree when you meet. You may want to personalise them to make it more relevant for your local area, and your MP may prefer to write their own. If you can't get the quote approved in the meeting you can follow up afterwards.

SOCIAL MEDIA

After the meeting make sure you share it on social media, including the picture you took with your MP. Remember to tag your MP and Together With Refugees in the post and use #FairBeginsHere. To help, [here](#) are some suggested posts. It is also important your MP posts about the meeting on their social media. You can find out more about following up with your MP in section 2.



LOCAL MEDIA

Your local media outlet will likely be interested to hear about the meeting and what your MP said. We have created two template press releases - one for those who did sign the Fair Begins Here Parliamentary Promise [here](#) and another for those who were supportive but didn't sign the Promise [here](#).

The press release templates include guidance on how to find your local media contacts and how to send it. If you would like more support on this you can send your press release to hannah@brightfoxcommunications.com and she can help you finalise the release and share it with your local media.

FINALLY, LET US KNOW!

Remember to let us know the meeting went. You can either fill out [this form](#) or write to us here: info@asylum-reform-initiative.org.uk The Together With Refugees team will keep you and the rest of the coalition posted on how the campaign is going across the country, what responses we're getting from MPs, and the progress we're making towards a fair new plan for refugees.





Together With Refugees
www.togetherwithrefugees.org

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